

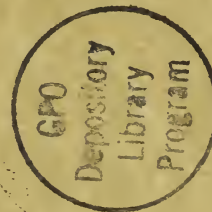
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A Change in Thinking

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No. 99-92



23 JUN 1992

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



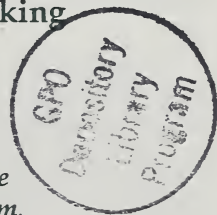
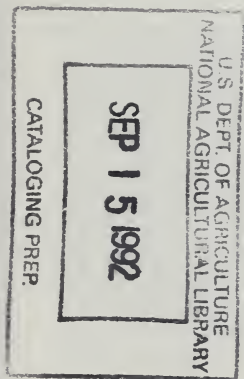
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For the Manager



Genesis...Beginnings...A Change in Thinking



"We have dedicated and hardworking people who want to do a quality job. We trust them. In caring for the land and serving people, our people should use common sense and their best judgement, and then go ahead."

F. Dale Robertson, Forest Service Chief

23 JUN 1992

*total employee involvement . . . vision . . . satisfaction . . .
shared responsibility for organizational excellence . . .
risk-taking . . . open communication and positive introspection . . .
boldness . . . empowerment . . . efficiency . . . recognizing value . . .
trust and confidence in yourself and others . . . creativity . . .
participatory management . . . broken down barriers . . . reduced
red tape . . . pride . . . team participation . . . innovation . . . rewarded
effort . . . enthusiasm . . . fostering a climate of trust . . . a new way
of thinking . . . in caring for the land and serving people*



Genesis means "beginning." Encapsulated in this word are the complementary concepts of new life, growth, change, and creativity. The role of the program manager is to provide leadership, direction, and stimulation. The manager must be equipped to recognize the signals of an organization ripe for change. The process, then, must be cultivated under conditions conducive to uninhibited communication, interaction, and growth. It must be given the latitude and flexibility of guidelines which allow it to take shape, but adhere to the mission and integrity of the organization. It must be encouraged by managers who perceive it as positive.

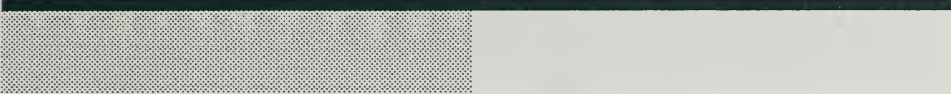
Include Everyone

Pull everyone together for your program, from the short-term temporary to the Chief Executive Officer. As the result of broad employee participation in Genesis², ideas of every color and caliber were brought to the table: some emphasized cost-savings; some suggested increased communication between field offices and headquarters. Permanent employees advocated medical benefits for temporary employees. Some proposed facilities improvement. Employees without small children proposed day care for those with young families. One of the more revolutionary proposals involved giving headquarters direct-hire authority in an effort to streamline recruitment and hiring practices. State Foresters were provided access to the Forest Service's electronic communications system. Three multidisciplinary research teams were created, a new and successful way to conduct research.

Examine Both Positives and Negatives

Organizations, like families, tend to accentuate strengths externally, and discuss weaknesses internally. The concept of "New Thinking" calls for consideration of strengths and weaknesses alike, both internally and externally. Productive introspection is accomplished when an environment exists that promotes open, honest communication in a forum where all members of the organization are encouraged to contribute freely without risking devaluation or dismissal, to explore questions such as these:

- Why do we exist as an organization?
- Who is interested in what we do?

- 
- Who are our actual clients and constituents?
 - What do our clients and constituents want us to do for them?
 - Who are we in the eyes of our various publics?
 - Are we accomplishing our stated mission?

Questions like these serve as probes and barometers. They may uncover misunderstandings about such issues as the organization's mission and operating structure, or miscommunication of the organization's position on a pivotal issue, both within its workforce and among those it seeks to serve. At the very least, this process can confirm the success of the organization's efforts to maintain an innovative, empowered, creative workforce, to communicate its identity and function, to achieve its mission, and to meet its operating goals.


Empower

The power behind the Genesis² program rests in its philosophy. Employees who feel empowered can do great things--even outside the parameters of a formal process: however, empowerment is not easily defined. It's not something that can be given to employees; it simply develops as they build an awareness of their abilities and their organization. Managers can help stimulate this awareness by providing the opportunity for folks at all levels to learn, share, participate, and make decisions that affect their job, work unit, or organization. Leaders must encourage an atmosphere of shared responsibility and attribute value to employee decisions and accomplishments. Employees should be free to recognize and implement change in areas within their authority, and use the formal Genesis² process to advocate change that cannot be brought about by any other means.

Exemplify Creativity

Design your program to give credit where credit is due using incentives. Use eye-catching brochures and flyers to let folks know about the new program that's in the works, then orient them, preferably in small groups, to the process. Afford every member of your workforce a voice by making them aware of the vehicle available to them and how it works. Make it fun!

Expect to receive ideas spanning the spectrum of organizational features and issues. Encourage employees to submit proposals that are researched, developed, and commu-



nicated in an understandable manner. Teamwork will play an important role here. Provide the suggestor the opportunity to "own" an idea. Overall, this will afford greater satisfaction and will stimulate new ideas to grow.

Encourage Innovation

Carefully encourage employees to understand that their ideas are welcomed, no matter how radical they may seem. All will receive fair consideration. Managers must be open to building on ideas that have potential and careful not to exclude those that may appear trivial or too complicated to tackle. Remember: each and every suggestion is generated by a creative, innovative individual who assumes a certain amount of risk in voicing an opinion. Managers must be sensitive not to stem the flow of this creativity.

Foster a Climate of Trust

Management will be faced with the critical task of communicating to all employees that new thinking and behavior—i.e. risk-taking, within the flexible bounds of a changing organization—is OK, and express a commitment to honoring employees' proposals for change without threat of penalization or adverse personnel action. Leaders must be sensitive not to create a competitive environment which could undermine efforts to build trust. Managers will also need to break ground for the cultivation of change and the open sharing of ideas and opinions. By all means, communicate! Close the loop and encourage all employees to communicate in return. The precedent for a climate in which individual differences are mutually respected must be set through top-down parameters; management will be called upon to practice these ideals while waiting for them to catch on at all levels of the organization.

Keep the Mechanism Economical

Implementation of the process must be simple and direct. At the Northeastern Station and Area, proposals for change are written briefly and clearly on a common form made accessible to all employees, or dictated over the phone to a program coordinator. Once evaluated and acted upon by a review team comprised of the Station and Area directors, members of their staff, program coordinators, and field or unit representatives, adopted proposals are implemented immediately. The status of proposals not adopted or sent to the Chief's Office for action is communicated directly to the suggestor(s), and made available for employee information (Figure 1, "From the Traditional to the Non-Traditional Ways of Doing Business" section).

Getting Started

1 At the Northeastern Station and Area, we employ a full-time program coordinator, whose role is to:

- Provide program leadership and direction
- Coordinate procedural and administrative aspects to ensure smooth and responsive action on all proposals
- Assist employees in defining and developing their ideas
- Supply management with analyses and recommendations of proposals
- Work with management and employees to promote the Philosophy throughout the organization
- Design and recommend programs to promote the Philosophy
- Monitor the climate and keep abreast of significant issues which could affect the program
- Communicate program information to all employees and selected external audiences

2 Volunteers stationed at all off-site locations work alongside the coordinator. These "field coordinators" help the program coordinator to:

- Increase program awareness
- Maintain program visibility
- Encourage proposals
- Identify problems and network ideas
- Provide information and ideas to the Coordinator
- Disseminate information and materials

The benefits of interaction:

Active interaction enables management to evaluate large numbers of ideas from diverse locations and sources for adoption into organizational life, facilitates information sharing, and cooperative proposal of ideas with organization-wide implications to top-line management. Overall, this interaction strengthens communication between headquarters and off-site locations.

3 Guidelines

Managers should establish some simple program guidelines. Here are some that we follow in the Northeastern Station and Area:

- Compliance with laws and basic regulations is fundamental. Innovations, risk-taking, and experimentation must be conducted within legal bounds. Suggestions for amending laws and regulations are welcomed.
- Work must be accomplished within the limits of funds allocated.
- The Genesis² program is bottom up. Employees have the lead to recommend changes and managers are to test those recommendations.
- There are no failures. Ideas that do not work will be viewed as learning experiences for both management and employees.
- Latitude is provided to restructure and change organizational and operational procedures.

4 Additional Considerations

Managers must recognize that not everyone is comfortable with change. A philosophy or program cannot be forced. Once defined, the process is available to those who *want* to use it. Managers must be particularly sensitive to middle management and supervisors who may feel threatened by a "perceived" transfer of power to the lower ranks. It is vitally important for managers to become coaches and counselors.

5 Getting Your Employees Started

Consider brainstorming or asking questions similar to these to stimulate employee response:

- If you were operating the organization as a personal business, what changes would you make in operating procedures?
- What regulations, processes, and reports would you eliminate?
- How would you improve on customer satisfaction?
- What new perks or benefits could you offer to your employees to enhance productivity?

Initial employee response to the Genesis pilot program was overwhelming, and revealed a wealth of pent-up ideas just waiting for an opportunity to be released. Following an initial questionnaire, a blank survey form was made available to capture employee proposals for change in an unstructured manner. Again, the response was considerable, and ideas ranged from simple changes in office layout to major redesign for developing research program proposals.

6 Results

Putting to work a new way of thinking, through a program like Genesis², can yield tangible and intangible benefits. Expect communications to be improved in all directions—up, down, and across the organization. This philosophy helps employees to learn more about the organization, and take vested ownership of its workings, while enhancing morale. Procedures will be simplified. Structure will change in an experience which can be very exciting.

7 Incentive Ideas

WHO gets incentives?

- everyone who submits a proposal
- everyone you intend to target when conducting a promotional or informational meeting about the program

WHY give incentives?

- to attract interest in the program
- to encourage employee investment in the philosophy
- to exemplify an attitude of creativity, innovation, and fun
- to circulate information about the program in a way that will ensure interest and attention
- to motivate and reward open communication

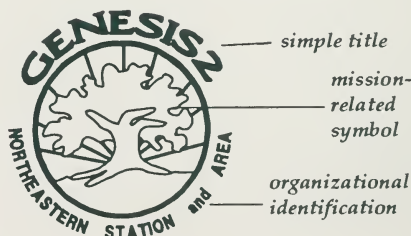
WHAT are some ideas of creative incentives?

- plaques
- mugs
- pins
- pens

HOW do we choose incentives specific to our organization?

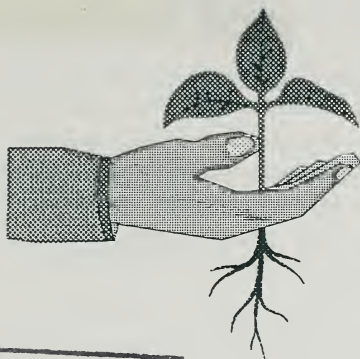
- a. Select visual or commonly recognized symbols of the organization's mission and objectives to display on souvenir-type items.
- b. Bear in mind any limitations defined by funds allocated for incentives.
- c. Design promotional activities which reinforce organizational objectives, take advantage of organizational resources, make the program visible, and are fun!

The Genesis² logo supports both the ideas of growth, change, and creativity, and the Forest Service mission.



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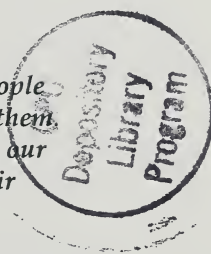
For the Employee



The stage is set. You have the freedom to be yourself; to voice your ideas for change; to risk making a difference that could improve the organization into the long term. A mechanism is in place for making your voice heard. Are you willing to take what you have...and put it to work? Do you have an idea? Breathe life into it and watch how far it grows.

"We have dedicated and hardworking people who want to do a quality job. We trust them. In caring for the land and serving people, our people should use common sense and their best judgement, and then go ahead."

F. Dale Robertson, Forest Service Chief



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rewarded effort . . . enthusiasm . . . fostering a climate of trust . . . a new
way of thinking . . . in caring for the land and serving people

The Vision

Catch hold of the vision

The Genesis² program is both a challenge and a vehicle for you. Since those closest to the work are often the ones who first recognize the need for change, and the first to identify issues and offer solutions, your role in the Genesis² process is crucial. The concept does not represent a new face for the old idea of a suggestion box or complaint desk; it is a way of contributing positive energy to tangibly support the achievement of our organization's mission. Many changes are already within our capacity to accomplish. However, if you find you are unable to cultivate change, a formal mechanism is available to help you. You have the support of your supervisors and management, who will provide you with details about how you can make your ideas known. Genesis² is your opportunity to participate, to be a team member. When you make your voice heard, you are also voicing pride in your work. Be creative, innovative, and exercise your talents. No idea is too large or too small.



Have the courage to act
instead of react.

-Darlene Larson Jenks

your challenge is to:

- Search for new information
- Put into practice a new way of thinking
- Claim ownership of the organization's mission

you have the opportunity to:

- Turn resources into new ideas
- Evaluate the merits of an idea
- Transform ideas into action through your own efforts
or through the program

Genesis is *your* program.

Grasp the Philosophy

The power behind the program rests in our organization's philosophy. Employees who feel empowered can accomplish great things without the trappings of a formal program. At the Northeastern Station and Area, our leaders are committed to providing an atmosphere of open communication and shared responsibility where you can participate, learn, and be involved with decisions that affect your job, your unit, or the agency.

Think Creatively

In any work assignment, you will see things you'd like to improve. Procedures are often complicated, inefficient, or sometimes, they just don't make sense. It is a human tendency to follow patterns that have been in place for years without periodically assessing that pattern's efficiency or effectiveness. Sometimes, implementing change is simple, but more often, it is complex. When unacceptable situations are viewed as challenges, creativity has room to flow. Looking at problems from a positive, creative attitude will help us to find solutions we can implement or ideas to turn into proposals to channel through the Genesis² program.

The Vehicle

Act on your ideas

You may have ideas spanning the spectrum of organizational features or issues. We encourage you to share them, but don't be surprised if your idea doesn't fly the first time. It took Colonel Sanders 1009 attempts to market his famous chicken recipe! Take a good look at your idea. Research and develop it. Be innovative. Involve others. No idea is too trivial or too complicated to tackle. Above all, don't give up!

Participate in the process

The Genesis² program is available to all employees of the Northeastern Station and Area. Use it to submit an idea for change when you have exhausted other more informal means. Your suggestion will then go to the Station and Area Directors and be given careful consideration and value.

Here's what to do:

1. Write down your idea on the "Proposal for Change" form (Figure 2, "From the Traditional to the Non-Traditional Ways of Doing Business" section).
2. Submit it to your Program Coordinator at Station and Area headquarters or to your field coordinator via electronic or ground mail. If you need assistance, feel free to contact the Genesis² Program Coordinator or the field coordinator at your location.

Here's what becomes of your proposal (Figure 1, "From the Traditional to the Non-Traditional Ways of Doing Business" section):

1. Your proposal will be acknowledged, numbered, and scheduled for review by the Program Coordinator, Directors, and review staff.
2. Your proposal is subject to review and comments by staff units as to its legality and feasibility.
3. The Directors will decide if your idea can be immediately implemented or if it should be discussed by the Review Committee, consisting of the Directors, selected management staff, and a cross section of Station and Area employees.
4. The Directors will decide to adopt, not adopt, or place the proposal on hold pending further development. Suggestions that are not within the Station and

Area's authority to implement can be referred to the Washington Office Steering Committee for decision. Proposals of a local nature are often referred to the Director's representative at that location for action.

5. The Program Coordinator will personally notify you of the decision made on your proposal. Depending on that decision, you may be asked to develop the idea further or to assist with its implementation. However, if you are unable to assist, your proposal will still be developed or implemented based upon its merit.
6. If your proposal is adopted, the news will be disseminated to all employees in any of the following ways:
 - a list distributed to all employees
 - hard copies posted on bulletin boards at all locations
 - flyers or announcements
 - publication in the Director's Office Notes, Area Action Line, or Nor'easter newsletters
 - electronic public files accessible to all employees



Note: All proposals are processed to completion; some take longer than others. It's not uncommon for proposals of grand scope to take several years. Sometimes we need to obtain permission from other agencies to allow us to implement a change; sometimes it takes a collaborative effort with other research stations to get ideas considered. Through our efforts, progress--steady though sometimes slow--is made.

Putting it all Together for Success

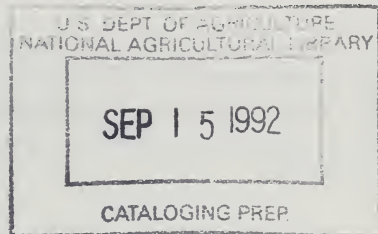
Programs such as Genesis² become possible when put to work for an organization that is ripe and ready for change, has full management team support, and employees interested in promoting positive growth. A philosophy of shared responsibility and empowerment is conducive to open discussion and evaluation of ideas. We, in the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station and Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry challenge you to:

- Trust
- Communicate
- Empower
- Participate
- Innovate
- Achieve

... and you will make a difference!



From the Traditional to the Non-Traditional Ways of Doing Business



Creativity...Innovation...Empowerment: The Forest Service Management Philosophy

In 1985, the USDA Forest Service began to explore a new management philosophy founded on the premise that to overcome mediocrity and to meet the challenges of the future, government must reduce bureaucratic burdens and empower its workforce to create, innovate, and fully exercise its talents. Under a Pilot Test Study, the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station was one of two Forest Service Research Stations to break with established concepts and procedures and to create a far more discretionary and flexible work environment—one conducive to increased productivity, improved quality of work, and, consequently, greater public service.

Born as "Genesis" in 1987, the Northeastern Station's pilot test program has grown and blossomed into the fully functioning program now called Genesis², serving both the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station and the Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share with you the program we call "Genesis"—a program driven by a philosophy of workforce management that has changed the way our organization conducts business. If you are a manager, the materials within this package will help you determine your need for a Pilot Program, and aid you in setting the groundwork for organizational development and change. If you are an employee, these materials will help you understand the Genesis process, and give you some ideas to cultivate your own creativity. We hope that your interest will be rewarded with success as you adapt and modify this philosophy to your needs.

Dwaine P. Burns

Director, Northeastern
Forest Experiment Station

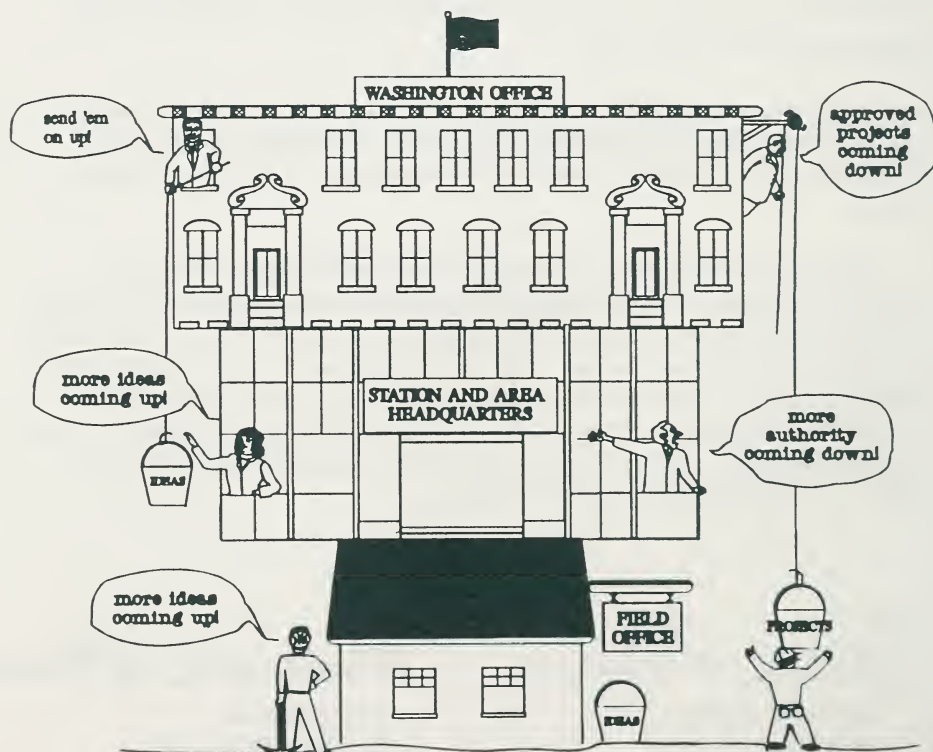
Michael J. Karim

Director, Northeastern
Area, State and Private Forestry

Genesis Is...A Change in Thinking

In short, the Genesis² program is designed to implement a philosophy of participatory management. It is a way of conducting business in which employees, supervisors, and managers work together to effect organizational growth. Each is responsible to carry out the organization's mission, pinpoint needs for improvement, and sustain its creative life.

Realizing the type of success which the Genesis² program affords will require an investment in change--a change in thinking. The philosophy behind Genesis² promotes a new organizational climate in arenas where a need for change has been recognized and envisions business as it could be, not business as usual. Risks will be taken by participants at each level, risks necessary to promote stretching, growth, and change. The goal of the Genesis² program is quantifiable improvement in the ability of the organization to meet its mission. The mechanism for change is its people. At the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station and Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, Genesis² has provided evidence that the performance achieved as a result of empowering employees is more important than preserving bureaucratic processes.



A New Forest Service Management Philosophy




Recognizing the Need for Change:

The Pilot concept originated with a **VISION** in 1985. Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson recognized that the Forest Service needed a way to improve the productivity of employees stifled and frustrated by bureaucracy. The Forest Service also needed a way to accomplish more with less money. Robertson decided to take steps to loosen up the organization so managers could foster an environment where employees are free to work to their full potential and to initiate changes important to themselves, their work units, and the Agency.

Pursuing a Course of Action:

- 1985** Pilot programs launched at 4 Pilot Units: Ochoco National Forest, Mark Twain National Forest, Gallatin National Forest, and Pacific Southwest Research Station.
National Pilot Test Coordinator appointed to the Washington Office.
National Steering Committee formed.
- 1987** Eastern Region and Northeastern Forest Experiment Station granted Pilot status.
- 1988** Washington Office designated a Pilot unit.
- 1989** The Pilot **PHILOSOPHY** becomes point number 6 in Chief Robertson's 'Working Agenda'.
Chief Robertson declares a working philosophy for the organization in "Chartering a Management Philosophy for the Forest Service", signed December 19, 1989.



1990 Other programs established on national forests and in the Rocky Mountain and North Central Research Stations.

1991 Program established in the Southern Research Station.
The pilot philosophy is integrated with other Forest Service quality management initiatives under an umbrella called "A Framework for Quality and Excellence in the Forest Service".

The Northeastern Station and Area Pilot Program: A Brief Chronology



1987 The Northeastern Forest Experiment Station director implements the Pilot Test Program and promotes the new management philosophy at the Station. Strong support from Station management cultivates the positive change generated by employees at all levels of the organization.

The Station's "Genesis" program provides a process for submitting ideas and the coordinator orients all employees to the program. Station staff contributes to the pilot philosophy at a national level and authors a "New Thinking" paper entitled, "Innovation and Creativity in a Government Research Environment."

1988 The Genesis Program Coordinator publishes a summary of all suggestions adopted by the Station, and organizes a network of Genesis coordinators at all Station field locations.

1989 Genesis is reorganized and expanded to include the Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, and renamed Genesis².

1990 The first Northeastern Station/Northeastern Area (NE/NA) Program Coordinator is appointed under the new joint program format. With the issuance of the Chief's "Charter for a New Management Philosophy in the Forest Service" (1989), the role of the coordinator encompasses advancement of the philosophy within the Station and Area, and management of the formal Genesis² process.

The seed starts to grow:

By the end of the first year, over 500 proposals had been received. Most suggestions dealt with administration and employee benefits. Two years later, more than 850 proposals had been received, and the Northeastern Station had contributed to the Pilot Philosophy at a national level. Approximately 300 proposals had been implemented. By the fourth year, the number of formal suggestions had decreased, a sign that the philosophy was successfully penetrating the organization, and that the need for a formal program was not as great. The philosophy was becoming an integral part of both Station and Area culture. Most employees were taking action on their own ideas, only using the formal proposal process to suggest changes that could not be brought about in any other way.

Some successes within the Northeastern Station and Area



RESEARCH

- Direct submission of manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals
- Evaluation panels for scientists extended from every 3 years to every 5
- 3 multidisciplinary research work groups established



ADMINISTRATIVE

- Demonstration Project and Direct Hire Authority
- Project leader and group leader authority to give cash awards
- Personal vehicle use for Government travel
- Wellness and leave donor programs
- Carry-over of up to 24 credit hours from one pay period to the next
- Agency-provided medical care
- Threshold on competitive bidding for small purchases raised to \$2500
- Government credit cards for small purchases
- Availability of allotted operating funds extended to two years
- Distribution of "Director's Office Notes" and "Area Action Line" to increase communication within the Northeastern Station and Area
- "Brown Bag" seminar series for sharing current project information and technology informally among units

Applying the Philosophy and the Process

When the Process was appropriate

- Scientists concerned that computer software supporting their research was not being disseminated in a coordinated way used the process to do two things: 1) to communicate their concern broadly, and 2) to coordinate an approach with other Station scientists who had similar concerns and present that proposal to the Washington Office.
- Employees needed information displaying the functions and services of administrative staffs. The Genesis² coordinator worked with Technology Transfer to publish reference sheets describing these functions, complete with contact names and phone numbers.
- Employees using sick leave to care for an immediate family member with a contagious disease are no longer required to submit an explanatory medical certification.

When acting on the Philosophy was sufficient

- Area work unit recognized internal difficulty working as a team and secured external assistance in conflict resolution and team building.
- Project leaders could pay travel expenses incurred by a candidate visiting to interview for a position. They could not, however, cover travel-related expenses for spouses. Project leaders brought this concern to their Director's attention, asking for further assistance in bringing about the change they desired.
- Employee desiring microcomputer support took initiative to complete procurement justifications and take necessary steps to obtain desired equipment.

The Proposal Process

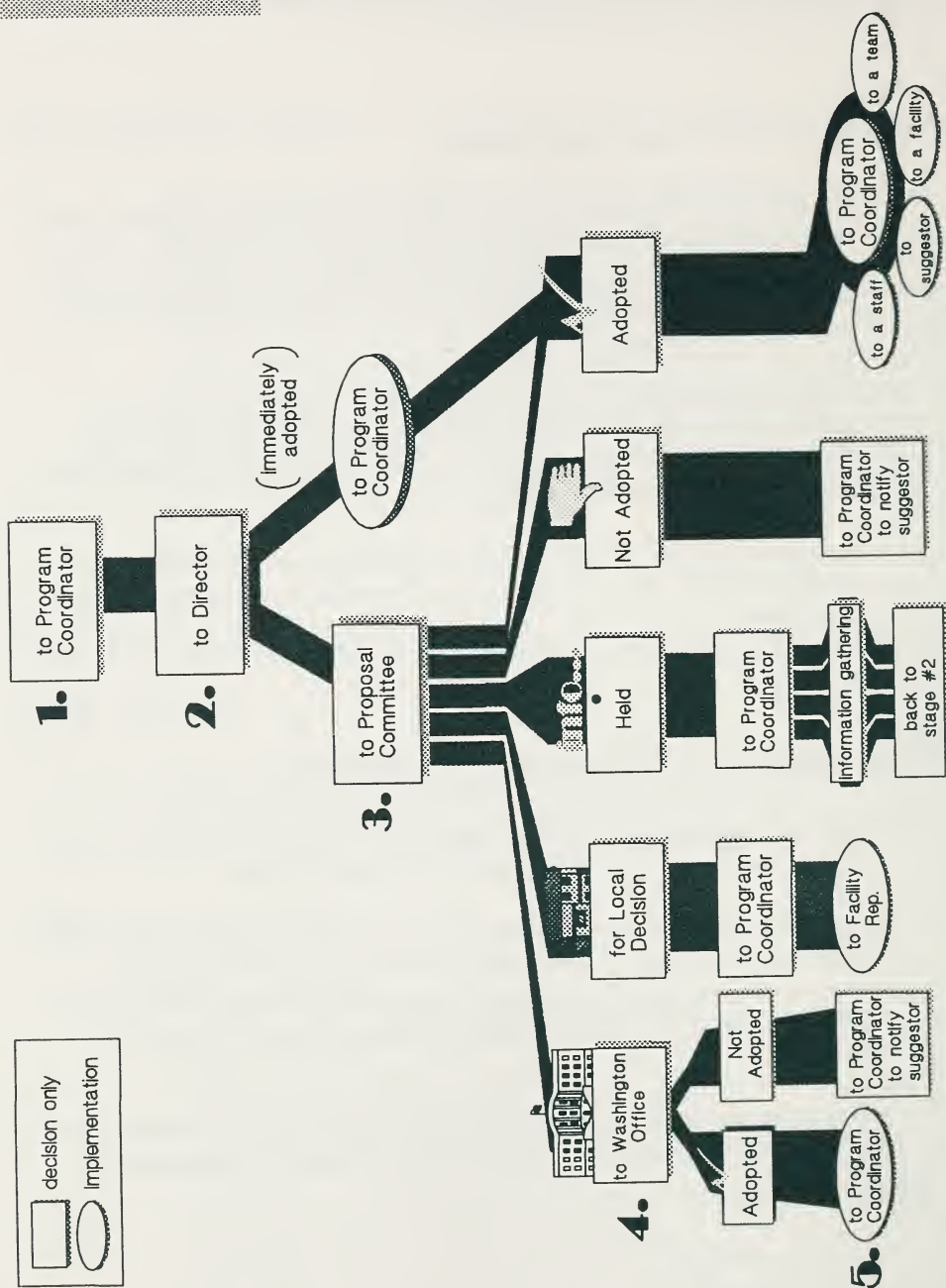


Figure 1

Proposal for Change Form (sample)

PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE (ONE PROPOSAL PER FORM)

UNIT:

DATE:

PROPOSAL NO.:

MY SUGGESTION IS...

THE CURRENT SITUATION IS...

BENEFITS OF THE SUGGESTION ARE...

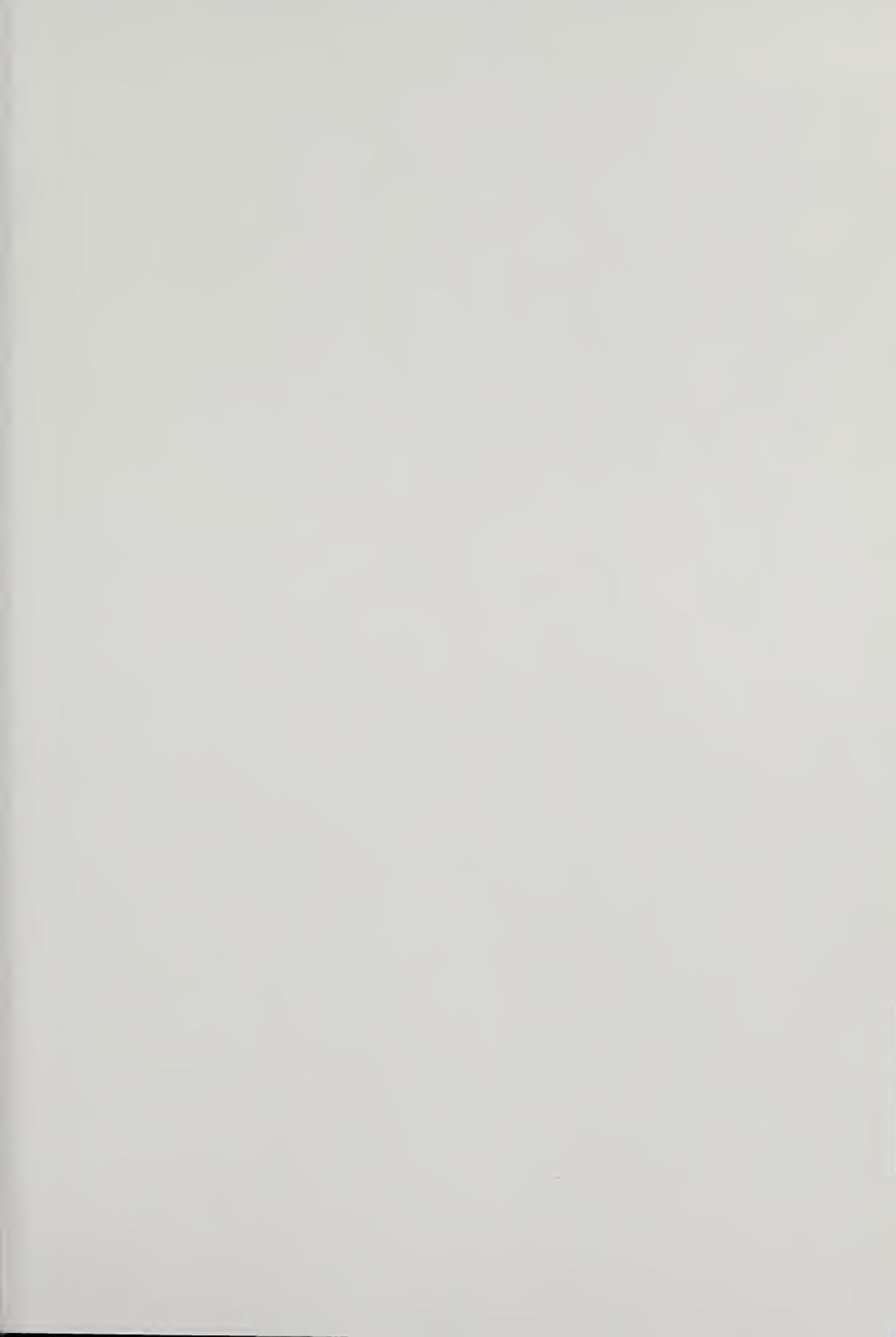
NAME:

COMMENT:

ACTION AND DATE:

Director			WO Steering Committee			
Adopted	Not Adopted	Hold	Date Submitted	Adopted	Not Adopted	Other

Figure 2





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For more information, contact:

NE/NA Genesis² Coordinator
USDA--Forest Service
5 Radnor Corporate Center, Suite 200
100 Matsonford Road
Radnor, PA 19087-4585



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